



CRS Report for Congress

The NATO Summit at Bucharest, 2008

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Summary

NATO will hold a summit in Bucharest, Romania, April 2-4, 2008. The allies will seek to clarify NATO's mission, with special attention to the stabilization of Afghanistan. They will also debate how to counter new threats, such as cyber attacks and energy cut-offs, as well as a possible missile defense system. In addition, they will decide whether to extend invitations for membership to any of three candidate states — Albania, Croatia, and Macedonia — and whether to put Georgia and Ukraine into the Membership Action Plan, a preliminary step to membership. See also CRS Report RL34415, *Enlargement Issues at NATO's Bucharest Summit*, coordinated by Paul Gallis. This report will be updated as events warrant.

Background

NATO will hold a summit in Bucharest, Romania, April 2-4, 2008. The allies face an enduring challenge in their effort to stabilize Afghanistan, and will discuss future steps there. New threats such as cyber attacks and energy cut-offs have arisen, and the allies will debate means to counter them. They will also decide whether to invite any of the candidates for membership — Albania, Croatia, and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM)¹ — into the alliance, and review as well the desire of Georgia and Ukraine to be placed in a Membership Action Plan (MAP), a significant step on the road to a formal candidacy for membership.

NATO's Mission

A principal theme of the summit will be the clarification of NATO's mission. While the allies agree that collective defense against an aggressor remains NATO's key mission, they continue to debate areas of collective security for which they should be responsible. Stabilization of countries and regions important to allied security may include such tasks

¹ The country's name is in dispute. It will henceforth be referred to as "Macedonia" for the sake of simplicity only. The United States government recognizes the country by its official name, the "Republic of Macedonia."

as nation-building, peacekeeping, and disaster relief. NATO has found difficulty in drawing the line between missions that directly threaten their security, and ones that require a less robust intervention, or that can be left to other international organizations.

Afghanistan. Above all, NATO's effort to stabilize Afghanistan is proving a test of allied capabilities and political will. Under a U.N. mandate, NATO has an International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan that is simultaneously combating a resurgent Taliban and attempting to stabilize the country through an ambitious rebuilding program.² Some allies have proven reluctant to send combat forces to engage the Taliban, and have their forces instead in more secure areas of the country. This reluctance has led to sharp criticism by allies, such as the United States, Canada, Britain, the Netherlands, and Denmark, which have suffered casualties to their forces that are frequently engaged in combat. The allies now have approximately 41,000 troops in Afghanistan, as well as 25 Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs). PRTs are the core of NATO's effort to rebuild Afghanistan by constructing schools, roads, and hospitals, and urging national and local leaders to improve governance. A continuing problem is Afghanistan's narcotics trade, which continues to expand, and to fuel the Taliban insurgency as well.

Led by the United States, the allies hope to complete a draft of a "strategic vision" document to lay out NATO's mission in Afghanistan more clearly, and to serve to persuade allied publics to provide the necessary resources to stabilize the country. The debate over this document captures the division in the alliance over collective defense and collective security. In general, those emphasizing collective defense view a possibly failed state in Afghanistan as once again supplying a haven from which terrorists can attack allied states. While some NATO governments believe firmly that both collective defense and collective security are NATO's mission, others emphasize that the latter should be assumed by other international organizations, such as the European Union and the U.N.³

Global Partnerships. Closely related to the debate over mission is the emerging place of NATO's global partnerships with governments that are not part of the Euro-Atlantic community but nonetheless have a shared interest in stabilizing unsettled regions. Australia, New Zealand, Japan, and South Korea, for example, have no interest in joining the alliance, but work alongside NATO governments in stabilizing Afghanistan. Each has a strong interest in countering terrorism, and in ensuring the supply of energy to global markets. At the summit, there will be an effort to define more closely the means by which such governments might integrate their security resources with the alliance.

New Capabilities Against New Threats

A second theme at the summit is likely to be clarification of the means by which NATO might counter emerging threats that often escape a purely military response. In spring 2007, a cyber attack against Estonia's government and banking system seriously disrupted them for a period of time. The Estonian government states that it traced the

² See CRS Report RL33627, *NATO in Afghanistan: A Test of the Transatlantic Alliance*, by Paul Gallis.

³ Interviews with officials in allied governments, 2007-2008.

attacks to Russian governmental sources. For the last several years, Russia has intermittently disrupted the flow of oil or natural gas to Ukraine, Georgia, Lithuania, and other countries, a step widely viewed in the alliance as an effort at political intimidation. In Bucharest, the allies will discuss means to counter such measures. Should cyber attacks and energy cut-offs, for example, be considered under Article V, in which all allies would be called upon to aid the country that has been attacked?

There are various proposals to counter cyber attacks and energy disruptions. Hardening key elements of a country's electronic system and providing redundancy are possible counters to a cyber attack. To diminish the effects of energy disruptions, NATO governments may discuss such countermeasures as energy conservation, the development of alternative fuels, the protection of pipelines and energy shipping routes, and the diversification of supply. Such steps would be financially costly and require substantial time to develop and implement.⁴

NATO is also engaged in a continuing debate over missile defense. The Bush Administration has proposed a site in Poland with 10 interceptors and an associated radar system in the Czech Republic. The Administration contends that the sites would assist in the defense of NATO Europe and the United States against a developing Iranian missile threat. Russia contends that the sites are directed against its ballistic missiles. Public opinion in Poland and the Czech Republic opposes the sites. Warsaw is insisting that the United States provide resources to upgrade Poland's air defense system, in the event that the interceptors' presence provokes an attack.⁵ The Administration has preliminarily agreed to finance such an upgrade. An agreement between the United States and Poland and the Czech Republic may be near. Some critics contend that the U.S. system is too rudimentary to counter such a possible attack, and that extensive further testing is warranted before the system should be put in place. NATO has also been considering a tactical missile defense system. In Bucharest, the allies will discuss whether the prospective NATO system might be "bolted onto" the U.S. system, and how the two systems might be funded. No final decision is expected at the summit.⁶

Enlargement, and the MAP for Georgia and Ukraine?

The third principal issue to be discussed at Bucharest is the candidacies of Albania, Croatia, and Macedonia for entry into the alliance, and the request by Georgia and Ukraine to be placed in NATO's Membership Action Plan, a significant step on the road to formal candidacy.⁷

None of the three candidate states has sufficiently large and capable military forces to contribute significantly to allied operations. Each is in the process of developing

⁴ See CRS Report RL33636, *The European Union's Energy Security Challenges*, by Paul Belkin, and CRS Report RS22409, *NATO and Energy Security*, by Paul Gallis.

⁵ CRS Report RL34051, *Long Range Ballistic Missile Defense in Europe*, by Steven Hildreth and Carl Ek.

⁶ Interviews with U.S. and European officials, 2008; "Accord on missile defense taking form, Czechs say," *International Herald Tribune*, January 17, 2008, p. 3.

⁷ For a more detailed discussion, see *Enlargement Issues at NATO's Bucharest Summit*, op. cit.

specialized “niche” capabilities in order to contribute to allied security. In that sense, this potential round of enlargement will not be a strategic one. However, given the continuing instability in southeastern Europe, fueled by Serbia’s aggressive opposition to Kosovo’s independence, this round of enlargement would potentially be one that could contribute to regional stability.

At the Bucharest summit, all allied governments, as a first step, must approve each candidate’s membership application. After that decision, each ally in the coming months will follow its constitutional processes to approve the Washington Treaty, NATO’s founding instrument, again, to cover additional territory for defense. All 26 governments must approve each candidate through their constitutional processes if the candidate is in fact to become a NATO member, a process that could be completed by the end of 2009. The Bush Administration is expected to support all three candidate states, but some allies are more hesitant.

Under its Membership Action Plan (MAP), Croatia has made improvements in governance and in modernization of its military. Less progress has been made in persuading a strong majority of the Croatian population to desire NATO membership, a cause for concern in the event that NATO should undertake a new and controversial mission. Almost 60% of the Croatian population now supports NATO membership, a figure that has been rising in recent months. Additional issues are corruption and the return of Serb refugees from the Balkan conflicts of the 1990s. Croatian officials say that they have passed anti-corruption laws and are now implementing them, a view confirmed by officials from several allied governments. Approximately one-half of the 300,000 Serb refugees who fled Croatia in the 1990s have now returned. Officials from allied governments confirm that Croatia has made an attempt to resettle these refugees, and that there is little discrimination against them in Croatian society. Croatia has recognized Kosovo, and some allies view Zagreb as an important channel for discussions to bring Serbia back into the fold of western-oriented European states.⁸

Albania is a small and impoverished country; its military resources are modest. OSCE reports on its recent elections detail a number of irregularities that call into question its adherence to international standards. The internal political atmosphere remains tense because of inter-party rivalries. The Albanian government is in the process of professionalizing and downsizing its military. While Albania has passed anti-corruption legislation, there remain doubts in the minds of some officials from allied governments about implementation. At the same time, Albania has pursued a moderate policy in the wake of Kosovo’s declaration of independence. Albania has recognized Kosovo, and has renounced any effort to merge the two countries, once a point of concern in Europe because of the overwhelmingly ethnic Albanian population in Kosovo.⁹

Macedonia, of the three candidate states, has reportedly made the most progress in military modernization. However, its political climate remains highly contentious. Macedonia, like Albania, has passed anti-corruption legislation, but implementation of the legislation is in an early phase. In addition, a dispute with Greece over Macedonia’s

⁸ Interviews with Croatian officials and officials from allied governments in Zagreb and Brussels, February 2008.

⁹ Discussions with officials from allied governments and Albanian officials, February 2008.

name must be resolved between the two countries if Athens is to accept Macedonian membership in the alliance. Greek Prime Minister Karamanlis said on March 3, 2008, that progress has been slow on this issue. “No solution — no invitation,” he said.¹⁰ Macedonian officials counter that they should have the right to name their own country, that they have amended the Macedonian constitution to renounce all territorial claims on Greece or any neighboring country, and have changed the country’s flag to eliminate possible reference to Greece’s northern province that is also called Macedonia. Macedonian officials have supported Kosovo’s independence, and express concern about Serbia’s unwillingness to contribute to regional stability.¹¹

A debate over whether to place Georgia and Ukraine in the MAP process is causing controversy in the alliance. Some Administration officials contend that both countries have made sufficient progress in governance and other requirements to be eligible for the MAP. Russia strongly opposes the two countries’ entry into the MAP. Moscow contends that the idea of a MAP invitation is fueled by conservative elements in the United States that wish to diminish Russia’s role in the Caucasus.¹² Administration officials and some allies contend that Russia must not be given a veto over countries qualified for NATO membership.

Georgia’s economy has improved in the last several years, and the country has a western orientation. At the same time, the OSCE found irregularities in the country’s January 2008 presidential elections, and some observers believe that governmental corruption is widespread.¹³ Some allies wish to evaluate Georgia’s performance in spring legislative elections before considering the country for the MAP. Those elections will follow the Bucharest summit. In addition, prospective NATO members must resolve conflicts with their neighbors; Georgia has two continuing internal separatist conflicts, in part fueled by Russian interference in the country’s affairs.

Ukraine’s leaders now desire NATO membership, but polls over the past year indicate that 60%-70% of the population oppose drawing closer to the alliance. Almost one-fifth of the population is ethnic Russian; these elements, joined by a sizeable proportion of ethnic Ukrainians, appear to be oriented more towards Russia, or to prefer a more neutral stance in foreign affairs. An apparent factor in the equation of the population’s view of NATO is that the Afghan and Iraq wars are highly unpopular in Ukraine. Some allies believe that Ukraine must first demonstrate a clear western orientation before being placed in the MAP.¹⁴ Supporters of placing Ukraine in the MAP process note that the country has great economic potential, and is geographically strategic. The country also has functioning democratic institutions, even if its domestic political

¹⁰ Statement of Prime Minister Karamanlis, Athens, March 3, 2008.

¹¹ Interviews with Macedonian officials and officials from allied governments, December 2007-February 2008.

¹² “Interview with Russia’s ambassador to NATO,” *Spiegel Online*, March 10, 2008, at <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world>].

¹³ “Western observers harden view of January 5 vote,” *Washington Post*, March 5, 2008, p. A16.

¹⁴ Interviews of officials in allied governments, January-March 2008; “La Georgie intensifie ses efforts pour intégrer l’Otan,” *Le Monde*, October 21-22, 2007, p. 5.

situation is occasionally tumultuous. In February 2008, the WTO judged Ukraine's market development and economic progress sufficient to merit an invitation to join.

Energy security is an issue of growing importance in the alliance. Some allies averse to placing Georgia and Ukraine in the MAP say that the alliance must first resolve issues in energy security. How, for example, would the allies come to the assistance of Georgia and Ukraine if Russia were to cut off the two countries' gas supplies?¹⁵ At the same time, this is already an issue for countries now in the alliance, as a gas cut-off could affect a number of allied states.

Other Issues

Kosovo. NATO carried out a bombing campaign against Serbian forces in 1999 in a successful attempt to stop Serb "ethnic cleansing" of the majority Albanian population in Kosovo, then a Serbian province. Under U.N. Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999), the United Nations established a protectorate mission (UNMIK) in Kosovo. In 2006-2007, U.N. envoy Martti Ahtisaari developed a plan for Kosovo's "supervised independence" and Serbian minority rights under EU leadership. Russia would not accept the Ahtisaari plan, and threatened to veto it in the Security Council.

After long preparation, the European Union and the United States together decided to implement the Ahtisaari plan. Kosovo declared itself sovereign and independent on February 17, 2008. The United States and a majority of EU countries quickly followed with a recognition of Kosovo's independence, which Serbia and Russia continue to oppose. On February 21, government-sponsored demonstrations in Belgrade led to the burning of part of the U.S. embassy there, and the evacuation of U.S. personnel. The United States contributes approximately 1,600 troops (in a force of 16,000) to NATO's KFOR, charged with maintaining a peaceful environment in Kosovo.

A majority of allied governments are convinced that NATO and the EU must make a strong response to any Serbian effort to destabilize Kosovo. The Serbian government continues to stir up a dissident Serb minority in Kosovo's north. Some violent elements of this minority have been forcibly removed by U.N. and NATO forces from government buildings that they had seized. A long-term objective of the alliance is to persuade Serbia that its future lies in the Euro-Atlantic community,¹⁶ and that it must give up what NATO Secretary General Jaap De Hoop Scheffer calls "a sullen nationalism."

Russia. The allies continue to seek accommodation with Russia on a range of issues. During the past two years, President Putin has become increasingly obstructionist in dealing with NATO. His support for Serbia and Serb separatists in Kosovo is but one element of his policy. Russia's cut-off of energy to neighboring countries, interference in Georgia's internal conflicts, and possible cyber attacks against Estonia are others. Putin is scheduled to meet with allied leaders at Bucharest, and these and other issues such as missile defense are likely to be on the agenda.

¹⁵ Interviews with officials from allied governments, February-March 2008.

¹⁶ "Strife could unravel stability in Kosovo," *International Herald Tribune*, March 21, 2008, p. 3.